

UNITED STATES

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# FIRST ANTELOPE TO RETURN TO NORTHERN ARIZONA IN HALF CENTURY

Sometime in the next two or three days a small herd of American pronghorn antelope will be moved back into the northwest Arizona "strip" after having been absent from the area for nearly 50 years, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall reported today.

Re-establishment of the antelope followed months of discussions with ranchers in the area and the final signing of an agreement between the Department's Bureau of Land Management and the Arizona State Game and Fish Commission.

Secretary Udall explained that BLM and State wildlife officials were in the process of transplanting a small herd from south of the Colorado River back into Antelope Valley--an area that once abounded in antelope and from which the world's record trophy was taken in 1878. The second largest antelope was also taken from the area in 1899. But a quarter of a century later a combination of drouth and over-hunting had wiped out the antelope in the Strip. No animals have been seen in the area for several decades, Udall said.

"The local ranchers and sportsmen and State and Federal officials who have worked out the long-sought re-establishment of antelope in the Strip deserve long applause for their hard work in the cause of conservation," Secretary Udall said. "The ranchers can take particular credit, especially because the only water available in the region has been developed by private capital."

Secretary Udall said BLM's Arizona State Director Fred J. Weiler reported that an enclosure to round up the antelope to be transferred was set up last week by State game management officials. When the animals are all in the enclosure--they hope for 20-40 head--they will be swiftly loaded onto trucks and moved to their new home in Antelope Valley. The actual point of transplant will be at Hack Canyon near June Tank, just a few miles from where the record animal was taken.

The Arizona "strip" is the hard-to-reach northwest corner of the State north of the Grand Canyon, adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park and the North Kaibab National Forest.

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